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ABSTRACT

This essay presents components of the debate between liberals and communitarians, discusses how this debate centers around policies affecting market economies and the role of government, and points out implications for school reform. The chief criticism communitarians aim at liberalism is that it promotes obsessive individualism, and in this process any meaningful sense of communal obligation, responsibility, and tradition has been lost or greatly diminished. Liberalism can be traced back to the 17th century when Christianity introduced the idea that human fulfillment could be achieved through an internal connection with God. This was a dramatic shift away from the once predominant notion that defined selfhood by one's contribution to or fit within society. Eventually, liberal philosophy evolved into the belief that self-identity required rational decision making and any allegiance to community (or to God, or to nature, etc.) was not essential. From a communitarian perspective, such a definition is fundamentally shortsighted because humans only come to make sense of their world, and their place in it, through social interaction. Furthermore, liberalism with its emphasis on individual choice has failed to account for moral reasoning, or the importance placed on making the "right" choice. Liberalism has encouraged the development of powerful multinational corporations that, in their quest for a bigger place in the market, have neglected the environment, disregarded the welfare and safety of workers, and defined success in terms of material accumulation. And liberalism has also promoted a system of government that protects the rights of these corporations. Communitarians call for instilling social values that stress judging what is morally right as opposed to always considering individual rights; giving the locus of policy-making power back to the community and ensuring that all members of that community be given a voice in shaping policies affecting their lives; and returning to the democratic idea of civic participation. Implications for schools include dropping standards that base school-related decision making on economic values, and cultivating civic virtues that stress the importance of family and community. (LP)

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The Parameters of the Liberal-Communitarian Debate

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The Parameters of the Liberal-Communitarian Debate

The aim of this essay is to provide a kind of primer for what is often referred to as the communitarian critique of liberalism. What are the main arguments in the communitarian-liberal debate, and what do these arguments suggest for education? By sketching an overview of how one might profitably approach these questions, our intention is that this essay will enable a more informed reading of the essays that follow in this issue of the *Peabody Journal of Education*, for communitarianism is still largely confined to debate about the economic market and/or the bureaucratic state, the twin pillars of Western liberalism. To date, communitarian scholarship has paid much less attention to a key element in the foundation supporting these pillars: public education. This theme issue of *PJE* is an attempt to address this shortcoming.

At its simplest, the chief criticism communitarians aim at the contemporary contours of liberalism is that they have allowed Lockean-inspired possessive individualism to create a cultural focus on the self as the predominant contributing force in identity formation. The emergence of this individualism has come at the expense of the roles hitherto played by factors outside the individual in shaping one's sense of self. Most notable among these is the role played by community membership, but also important are external factors such as religious ties and connections to the earth. In short, Western liberal culture has produced individuals obsessed with themselves, or with their own rights, a situation that has led Christopher Lasch to claim that the United States, at least, has

succumbed to a "culture of narcissism."[1] In the process, so the argument goes, any meaningful sense of communal obligation, responsibility, and tradition has been lost or greatly diminished. This loss is reflected in the pervasive alienation, widespread search for meaning, and yearning for connectedness to someone or something outside the individual so characteristic of the modern American social landscape. The communitarian agenda (again, at its simplest) is designed to resurrect a sense of community allegiance and responsibility.

As with most abbreviated accounts of complex intellectual orientations, our synopsis of communitarianism will probably leave some less than satisfied, and scholars often identified with the communitarian camp would likely have reservations about accepting it as an explanation of their views. Actually, communitarian scholars scarcely ever use the term communitarianism, and, importantly, they are a long way from seeing eye to eye on questions related to the present state of the Western political economy. Delineating the communitarian agenda, therefore, as Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift have pointed out, is no easy task.[2] Our approach to making communitarian thought accessible to a broad spectrum of the educational research community will be to provide a brief historical survey that identifies probable antecedents to both liberalism and communitarianism. This should yield a somewhat more satisfying statement of what constitutes the essentials in the communitarian critique of liberalism. Following this, we will focus on a few of the problems long associated with modernity and the communitarian response to these problems. Finally, we will pose

several questions of special significance to educators suggested by the debate between liberals and communitarians.

The Genesis of Modern Liberalism and Communitarianism

The literature on the historical development of modern liberalism is rich and comprehensive. Two excellent accounts are provided by Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor.[3] While their work traces the roots of liberal thought back to classical Greece and Rome, for the sake of brevity, we will use the seventeenth century as a starting point since this age can, without much controversy, be designated as the beginning of the modern era. Taylor maintains that by the time Descartes was writing in France, Western conceptions of selfhood had already undergone a dramatic "inward turn."[4] That is, with Augustine and the ascendancy of Christendom, human fulfillment came to be found within the self. In particular, an individual's identity took on meaning through the internal connection one made with God. This was a dramatic shift away from the once predominant classical notion that defined selfhood by one's contribution to or fit within the polis. Also at work in setting the scene for liberalism's development was the increasing acceptance of individual autonomy in matters of self definition. The liberal John Rawls has identified how the sixteenth-century Reformation contributed to this acceptance, thereby also clearing the way for liberalism's development. Given the successful break-up of the Catholic Church in parts of Europe, choice, at least religious choice, became a more predominant dimension of the Western human experience.[5]

At Descartes' arrival on the intellectual scene, then, two liberal tenets regarding conceptions of the self were already in place. One was that one needed to look inward for fulfillment, and the other was that a measure of autonomy, or the ability to exercise choice, was figured into the process of self definition. Descartes' contribution was to connect autonomy to the power of human rationality. This had the effect of magnifying what Taylor referred to as the Augustinian inward turn. Fulfillment itself was rapidly finding itself bound up with the exercise of rational power. In fact, for Descartes, as his famous cogito suggests, humans were rationality.

Descartes represents a crucial juncture in terms of liberal conceptions of selfhood. His separation of mind and body is often targeted for blame by thinkers representing diverse intellectual and philosophical orientations; among them are deep ecologists, communitarians, civic republicans, and postmodernists. According to these critics, Descartes, along with his English contemporary, Francis Bacon, is responsible for "unleashing" instrumental reason. Bolstered by instrumental reason, mankind was to make its boldest, and largely unprecedented, declaration of dominion over the world. Nature was to be "our slave," to be put to use by its "masters and possessors," into the full service of humanity. A modern anthropocentrism began to replace a feudal theocentrism as a central feature of the European world view, just as heliocentric scholarship began to replace geocentrism. From the perspective of communitarians, most important about the Cartesian moment in the evolution of liberalism is that the door was widely opened for culturally defining fulfillment as something that might be found

totally within the context of the self. Stated differently, what was radical about Descartes' magnification of the Augustinian inward turn was that human fulfillment could be achieved merely through the exercise of reason, rendering outside sources or connections nonessential. From Descartes' day onward, allegiance to community (or to God, or to nature, etc.) could be thought of as superfluous or even as unnecessarily burdensome.

This emphasis on rationality paved the way for the seventeenth-century scientific revolution and for an increasingly volitional dimension within the liberal notion of selfhood. Humankind was now free to act upon the world unfettered by the constraints of scholastic philosophy and its singular focus on divine order. A cultural emphasis on individual choice coupled with technological advances, achieved as a result of increased scientific inquiry, created a conducive climate in which entrepreneurialism flourished. The seventeenth-century revolution in science fed the eighteenth-century assault on the feudal political economy. No less assisted in its development was "enlightened" human rights theory. Freedom, equality, and the right to pursue one's own projects in life were justified on the basis of man's (literally) rational power.

At this point it is possible to identify two liberal trajectories that might have been followed. Snauwaert and Theobald argue that Thomas Hobbes and Gerrard Winstanley, contemporaries in Cromwell's English Free State, represent early architects of these differing liberal traditions. The Hobbesian story is familiar enough. Free, mankind would inevitably self-destruct. Only under the guidance of an all-powerful state could man's volitional character be

directed toward positive ends. For Winstanley, there existed another possibility. He believed the broad-based, community-oriented practice of political participation could enable individuals to maintain a deep connection to a source of fulfillment other than the self. Winstanley's conception of freedom was "true enjoyment of the earth," a rather sharp contrast to the Hobbesian view of freedom defined as the removal of any obstructions to the free play of instrumental reason.[6]

One dimension of Winstanley's civic republicanism was his faith in humankind's ability to meet the challenges of a free society without necessitating powerful, pervasive state intervention in its affairs. Jefferson was clearly convinced of this as well. Yet, even a cursory look at the history of the modern liberal state's evolution over the past several centuries illustrates that this faith was never fully put to the test. Rather, there has been an unmistakable preoccupation with order in the liberal tradition. Control was a vital consideration for Locke and an obsession for Hobbes. It was a deep concern, too, for federalists like Alexander Hamilton and James Madison. In fact, it did not take many years for the American republic, born as an expression of man's right to rebel, to place "domestic tranquillity" very high on its agenda. Ascendant conceptions of freedom in the U.S. very early took shape along Hobbesian lines.

As the emergent modern state found its activities increasingly tied up with the demands of securing favorable conditions for the free pursuit of happiness, or more accurately and in accord with Locke's original formulation, for the free pursuit of property, the

eighteenth-century German philosopher, Johann Herder, was further refining the liberal view of identity formation along individualist lines by popularizing the idea of selfhood as something singularly unique. For Herder, there is only one me and, further, only one original way to be me. Individuals were to find this way only by looking within themselves, not in the world around them. Conformity to social institutions is a threat to one's originality and only stands to impede the authentic realization of one's true self.[7] Thus, in the development of liberal thought, the importance of society's role in shaping identity suffered a further, and nearly fatal, blow. After Herder, modern selfhood was defined almost exclusively by the exercise of rational choice in the pursuit of one's identity.

From a communitarian perspective, such a definition is fundamentally shortsighted because of its neglect of the fact that humans only come to make sense of their world, and their place in it, through social interaction. Simply put, no individual can possibly find an identity apart from others. Yet the criticism extends beyond a definitional dispute over how the individual might properly be construed. Liberalism was further mistaken in the ways its emphasis on individual choice intersected with morality. Here the problem is that we came to equate the mere exercise of choice, rather then the quality of choice, as the measure of selfhood. Moral reasoning, or the importance placed on making the "right" choice, began to slowly fade as an essential aim of decision making. People must be free to make and follow their own path in life, and any notion of moral obligation whose source is external to the individual is seen as an intrusion on one's freedom. Of course the advent of

modern science played a role here, too. As scientism continued to find its way into the Western mindset, the decline of moral considerations as a central component in the exercise of choice was further augmented. The scientific method increasingly was becoming used as a tool for exonerating humans from the arduous task of ethical deliberation.

This is not to suggest, though, that mainstream Western liberal culture is bereft of an ethical position.[8] As Charles Taylor has argued, the central position liberalism affords is equality, a tenet that, at least in theory, seems to demand a tolerant, neutral state, one that promotes a morality built on openness to other ethical positions. If we are free to decide what concerns us, a tolerant population is a must. But this population also becomes, by default, little practiced at analyzing the merits of various ethical positions. Left to ourselves and ill-prepared to judge wisely on matters of virtue, we have been left, or so the communitarians claim, adrift in a culture increasingly devoid of sources that bring meaning to our existence.

The Communitarian Agenda and the Problems of Modernity

While the liberal state's preoccupation with order and stability, defended so forcefully by Hobbes, has been a driving concern of governments throughout the modern era, the state's interest in measures of social control seems to have increased sharply over the last century. As just one example, we spend huge sums each year building and staffing prisons to house a steadily growing criminal population. Studies of trends in the workplace point to "guard labor"--people employed in some manner as agents for purposes of

"domestic tranquillity"--as one of this nation's fastest growing occupational groups. "Getting tough on crime" has become a politically expedient slogan adopted by recent candidates for all levels of elected office in the United States. To communitarians this is evidence of a serious cultural crisis.

Ours has evolved into a society devoid of the very communal dimensions that might bind us together around a conception of common good. Becoming less and less important in our sense of who we are, as individuals or as a people, is a set of interlocking obligations that one must shoulder with regard to one's neighborhood, home town, region, or state. Individualism has left us responsible only to ourselves and to those we permit into the circle of our immediate private life, and for the latter, even these decisions are often measured solely in terms of utility defined in individualist terms, as evidenced by high divorce rates. The unconditional relationship strikes many as a strange idea for the ties that bind people together have become instrumental in nature, and as such, frequently only temporary. The traditional liberal conception of community is a group of people who join forces in order to increase the odds for success in the individual pursuit of self interest.[9] When construed in this fashion, the result is a society marked by fragile commitments between people, an inadequate system of social support and, consequently, uncertainty and anxiety. Under these conditions, the center cannot hold for, as communitarians would argue, there hardly exists a center at all. Put simply, in the absence of interlocking obligations among people, keeping domestic tranquillity becomes an ever more difficult task, or so

communitarians would argue. Almost paradoxically, the state finds itself in a bind where preserving the conditions of individual liberty under which citizens might exercise free choice requires action that threatens individual liberty.

In the face of this bind, the communitarian agenda includes certain cultural reinsertions, about which more will be discussed shortly. A sense of committed belonging to a place, of shouldering mutual obligations inherent in living well in that place, would be one such reinsertion, and is worth noting here. The value in this, they claim, is that in so doing that our lives become reinvested with meaning. Fulfillment, in other words, comes from shouldering the burden of unconditional relationships, not from escaping them. This is why Descartes was such a crucial figure in the history of liberal thought. Though one can trace an inward focus-on-the-self to Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo nevertheless maintained a vital connection to something other, and greater, outside the individual. Here, full being was not possible without a connection to God. Descartes changed this forever by clearing the path toward a conception of selfhood as something rightfully preoccupied with one's individual development through reason or, ala Herder, being true to one's unique identity within.

These ascendant notions of identity formation translated into powerful political theory. Liberalism facilitated the reemergence of a democratic ethos in Western political thought and both helped to bring about and was shaped by the dismantling of the rigidly hierarchical system of social positioning characteristic of the feudal era. For the most part, communitarians view these developments

favorably, but see the Enlightenment as a failure in the ways it too narrowly prescribed the proper sphere of moral deliberation. The Enlightenment crowd placed moral wherewithal within the individual and in so doing largely curtailed the burden of having to consider these moral commitments springing from one's relationships to others. A farmer, for instance, need not worry about whether the construction of a fence, the quality of which might adversely affect a neighboring farmer, violates an ethics of community, for no such ethics any longer exists. What is important is the freedom to pursue one's own projects, in this case, to use private property as the farmer sees fit based on an assessment of his/her own needs and wishes.

Here then we find a key and incisive criticism leveled by communitarians at liberalism. Namely, liberalism, in it's staunch advocacy of individual rights and liberty, does not adequately take into account the social costs of decisions made by individuals, nor does it promote decision-making that affords a high value to long-term consequences. Though the formulators of modern liberal theory probably did not have this in mind, the transcendent importance given to individual self-interest in their conception of free society has provided an ideological defense for actions and policies that are destructive of community cohesion and environmental well-being, destructive of the very set of social and natural conditions that must be preserved in order to sustain society's ability to reproduce itself. In one sense, this criticism points to what communitarians see as an oversight in the theoretical formulation of liberalism. In another sense though, this reproach can be read as an empirical claim, the validity of which is supported by

the mass of evidence accumulated as liberalism has been tested out in its real-world application over the past several hundred years.

For many communitarians, nowhere is the evidence of liberalism's failure more telling than in the area of economics. Buttressed by the tenets of liberal political theory, "free-market" capitalism has asserted itself as the dominant paradigm of economic organization adopted by modern industrial states. The commercialist economies envisioned by the likes of Hobbes, Locke, and Hamilton descended upon the West with a speed unmatched at other points in history. Accompanying this descent was an important, and according to communitarians, ominous, extension of the individualist creed. That is, individual liberty to pursue self-interest was no longer solely to persons but was extended to a new kind of "individual"-- the corporation. Whereas the vision of self-interested people competitively interacting in a free market to pursue their own interests and thereby efficiently making use of economic resources has a certain appeal, the vision is dramatically altered, and the appeal is greatly diminished, when super powerful multi-national corporations appear as players. How can a market be "free" with such massive power inequity among participants? Communitarians point to the nearly catastrophic consequences or corporate industrialism's dramatic growth, fueled as it has been by the pursuit of greater profits above all other ends. Among these consequences are widespread neglect of the environment, disregard for the welfare and safety of workers, engendering a culture of consumption where success is defined in terms of material accumulation, the glorification of wealth over more important social values, exploitation of third

world labor and natural resources, and foreign policies designed to protect markets and often at the expense of human rights. History provides many accounts of how the widespread and pervasive existence of these abuses has fostered resistance among those most harmed. In turn, it is precisely this resistance that many critics point to in explaining the increasing preoccupation with social control so typical of modern industrial states.

Here we come to another dimension of the communitarian critique of liberalism. It takes a huge, powerful bureaucratic state to effectively govern and keep running the workings of a huge "global" economy. In effect, while government was originally formulated in liberal thought as an unobtrusive arbiter of disputes and provider of basic services whose guiding principle was non-entanglement in human affairs, what has actually developed is a bureaucratic behemoth, the "corporate state," an entity that many see as more responsive to the needs of capital than to the needs of citizens. Consequently, democracy is threatened. Democracy in such a state--and here U.S. voter participation rates are evidence--becomes a chimera that must be sold by the corporate-controlled nightly news and other media outlets. As corporate hegemony increases in these and other ideational institutions of a society, prospects for democracy diminish. Indeed, contemporary democratic theorists have labored to construct more "realistic" definitions of democracy, definitions better aligned with the modern political landscape than older versions that idealistically placed at their center widespread and frequent involvement by ordinary people in political decision making.[10] Communitarians see these attempts at redefining

democracy as further evidence of liberalism gone wrong. They offer a number of suggestions for reversing this state of affairs.

1) *Emphasize "the Good" over "the Right"*

The introduction of human rights theory to Western political thought, along with its subsequent development therein, is arguably liberalism's most profound contribution to the process of how modern day humans see the world and their place in it. Communitarians certainly do not dispute the idea of rights, and seldom argue against their existence. Rather, what communitarians do object to is the unilateral glorification of individual rights above all other desirable social values. For instance, John Rawls, who many see as the leading spokesperson of traditional liberal theory, continues to defend the priority of the right over all other values. Communitarians argue that rights alone are not the measure of the "good" society. They may be a necessary precondition, but in no sense are they sufficient. By this account, rights are not an end unto themselves, but are to be valued because, when honored, they help to bring about the conditions under which the good life is possible. The distinction between communitarians and liberals is sharp on this point. Whereas the former allow a communally shared vision of the good life as a guide to solving problems, administering justice, and how best to organize and conduct the affairs of society, the latter reject this vision in favor of individual freedom to pursue "projects" as the first principle to be observed when structuring social affairs.[11]

In the absence of a commonly shared commitment to a substantive idea of the good, liberalism has pushed individual rights talk to the forefront in the discussion over one's relationship to the

rest of society, and has done so in a way that has limited our view of what individuals might accomplish when working in cooperation with others sharing a common aim. For communitarians, this is the predictable result of an embrace of a liberal political theory that contends government's role is to remove all obstacles to individual autonomy, and a liberal economic theory that contends the greatest good is realized when individuals pursue their own interests. When combined, these two positions elevate the primacy of individual rights to the detriment of social well-being. This society's increasing reliance on litigation as a manner of resolving disputes is used as one piece of evidence in support of this critique.

Thus communitarians argue for a correction to what they perceive to be a movement towards individual rights that has gone too far. Namely, they wish to invest communities with some autonomy over what they agree to call the good life. They would have this vision of the good life reinserted into the conversation about how best to decide matters affecting the community. Communitarians see little sense in the liberal argument that the state should attempt to maintain impartiality over competing conceptions of the good life because, first, they doubt that such neutrality is theoretically possible, and second, they read the historical record as supporting the claim that the modern liberal state, in practice, has indeed privileged certain conceptions of the good life, such as free market capitalism, over others. Better that the state admit its bias and allow citizens the power to democratically shape it than to cling to a false sense of neutrality. However to do this there must be a recognition that the "good" deserves attention along with the "right".

2) *Emphasize "Particularity" rather than "Difference-blindness"*

Liberalism's promotion of the "neutral" state tends toward a normative account of policy creation that emphasizes difference-blindness. In other words, all individuals and groups are to receive equal advantage from government policies. Our system of jurisprudence, as an example, is based on the principle of equal treatment under the law. To be precise, in liberal moral and judicial theory, justice is blind. In the arena of policy creation, the guiding maxim is that the aim of the neutral liberal state is to create and maintain the conditions of a level playing field. Unless they can be shown as necessary to correct clear and present power imbalances in the social order that work to deny equal opportunity, policies that favor some one or group are seen as giving an unfair advantage in the pursuit of self-interest and consequently should be avoided.

Communitarians would not deny that the principle of equal protection under the law is an essential requirement of the good society, nor would they have the state arbitrarily favor certain groups in their policies, but they do object to state neutrality, as a principle for governing, because it neglects diversity among communities, often times with harmful consequences. Beyond the theoretical and empirical objections to the neutral state touched on in the last section, communitarians point to the ways in which such a view of the state inadequately deals with relevant differences among groups of people. Stated differently, the criticism is not so much that the liberal state is barred from taking difference into account when making policy, for clearly it can, but the liberal emphasis on governmental neutrality has, in practice, nurtured a tendency toward

a lack of attention to difference. For example, over the last several decades we have witnessed the trend among state departments of education to pursue school consolidation in the name of efficiency and in the name of increasing the prospects for equal educational opportunity. In many such cases, the impact of this policy on rural communities--where the local school, slated for closing and merger with another school in a different town, is a great source of community cohesion--managed to escape the vision of policy makers.

To correct this deficiency, communitarians propose a policy-making agenda wedded to the demands of particularity rather than to difference-blindness. They would build a concern for a community's prosperity, defined in broader terms than just economic measures, into the process of policy formation. Michael Walzer draws attention here to what he refers to as "spheres" of justice. By this he means that in a society attentive to the value of community, social goods would be distributed according to cultural, geographic, historical, and other context-bound circumstances. "Justice is rooted in the distinct understanding of places, honors, jobs, things of all sorts, that constitute a shared way of life. To override those understandings is (always) to act unjustly."[12] For Walzer, communities ought to be respected to the point of allowing them to work out the meaning that they will attribute to social goods. For instance, there may be particular characteristics of a community that render supply and demand an unsatisfactory basis for determining the shape of health care services should take. In effect, the communitarian emphasis on particularity is an argument for the twin democratic demands that the locus of policy making power be

allocated at the smallest level of community possible and that all members of that community be given a voice in shaping those policies that affect their lives.

3) *Emphasize Participation rather than Juridical Proceduralism*

Under liberalism, the good society is a collection of self-interested individuals, free to choose their own life projects, bound together by agreement to respect the rights of others in the pursuit of these projects. Again, the state is to take no position with regard to individual projects, but rather is limited to ensuring that individuals honor the agreement between themselves and that government policy affords equal protection to all. The liberal state takes its form through a set of procedures delineating how non-partisanship will be maintained while settling disputes among individuals. Shaped in part by this view, our government has taken on the role of arbiter of clashing interests, the final authority as to whose rights were infringed upon and whose were not. In Michael Sandel's words, the U.S. has become the "procedural republic."[13]

The procedures around which our republic is united are juridical in nature, that is, they are for the purpose of passing along a judgment. When interests clash, the method for resolving the matter is to have both sides appear at a public hearing in front of a presumably disinterested third party who declares one party to be the winner. Communitarians do not object to such procedures in principle. In fact, most see them as just measures of last resort when resolution resists face-to-face attempts at working out differences. However, some communitarians argue that under liberalism's sway these procedures have become the preferred manner of first resort.

The problem here is that reliance on juridical proceduralism has come at the expense of more cooperative methods of conflict resolution and political coalition building. Liberalism's accent on proceduralism frames the popular view of social affairs in terms of "your interest vs. my interest" and, as a result, people fail to see that there may be substantive commitments they hold in common, commitments that could work to counter the alienating and divisive effects of modern life.

To correct this shortcoming, communitarians argue that local politics and local decisions, at a minimum, have to come under the dominion of a broad-based local political culture, one marked be extremely high levels of participation. This is a call for nothing less than the rekindling of a Jeffersonian view of civil democratic society, obviously not something that can occur overnight. However, communitarians have suggested numerous alternatives to contemporary political procedures that could effect a movement toward reclaiming allegiance to the democratic ideal of civic participation. For example, Benjamin Barber argues that those who attend to local administrative functions should be chosen by lot and that in the process a sense of community allegiance and responsibility will be reinserted into conceptions of selfhood and what it takes to lead a fulfilled life.[14]

Some Concluding Questions

We have tried to sketch the parameters of the debate between liberals and communitarians and to demonstrate how this debate has centered around policies for the market and for the state. Much less

attention has been paid to what an embrace of communitarian theory might mean for that way that education happens in the schools of this nation. To address this shortcoming would be beyond the scope of this essay but the analysis that is here seems to suggest some interesting questions. If the state and market have failed to cultivate civic virtue, and, further, they have undermined the ability of family, neighborhood, and community to do the same, is there room for a fundamental rethinking of the aims and purposes of schooling? Are there things that schools might do to promote civic virtue?

The standard that currently drives school-related decision-making seems to hinge on whether new policies or practices will improve the life prospects of children in a competitive economic market. Could this standard be dropped in favor of something like democratic participation? Instead of training students in habits of thought geared toward maximizing self-interest, is it possible for schools to promote habits of the heart? Can loyalty, allegiance, responsibility, and a propensity for unconditional commitment become, at a minimum, matters for systematic deliberation in the public schools of this country?

Is there a middle ground between neutrality and indoctrination that can be used to engage the question of what values we currently teach in our public schools? And thereafter, what values we should and can teach? The question of values is usually unduly polarized. As Amitai Etzioni has pointed out, when the question comes up, someone quickly rejoins, "But whose values will we teach?" This is invariably said as the last word, or the trump question intended to

put all subsequent conversation to a halt.[15] But it need not. Many more values unite us, or can unite us, than divide us. We need not begin and therefore end a values discussion with abortion. We can examine the value of community, of neighborliness, and what is more, we can find ways to put such values to work in the administration of our schools, in the funding of our schools, and in the curricular and pedagogical work of our schools.

This is not the typical rhetoric of school reformers, although it can be found somewhere within the recent agenda of folks like Ted Sizer, John Goodlad, Henry Levin, and James Comer. More often, school reform centers around doing better by the underachievers or those kids who for whatever reason are unsuccessful in school. Traditional schools reform endeavors focused on improving our record at moving these kids, too, into the mainstream of America's market-oriented society. One can readily see that from a communitarian perspective, this is not reform at all, but simply an additional contribution to the size and scope of the problem.

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[1] Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Warner Books, 1979).

[2] Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992). Mulhall and Swift have provided an invaluable book-length analysis of the liberal-communitarian debate. They set up John Rawls as the liberal standard, of sorts, from which the major communitarian theorists deviate. Our approach in this article is to focus less on the major contributors and more on essential points of divergence.

[3] See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) and Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); and idem, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

[4] Taylor, *Sources of the Self:*, 127-142.

[5] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), xxvi-xxvii.

[6] Dale T. Snauwaert and Paul Theobald, "Two Liberal Trajectories of Civic Education: The Political and Educational Thought of Hobbes and Winstanley" *Journal of Educational Thought* 28 (August 1994): 179-197. Winstanley represents what might be called an agrarian liberal tradition. Jefferson and other Americans can legitimately be called heirs to this tradition. For more on this topic, see Paul Theobald, "The Advent of Liberalism and the Subordination of Agrarian Thought in the United States" *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 5 (1992): 161-182. Also see James Montmarquet, *The Idea of Agrarianism: From Hunter-Gatherer to Agrarian Radical in Western Culture* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1989).

[7] For more on this point, see Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 30-32.

[8] Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

[9] Mulhall and Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, 15.

[10] For an example, see Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1942); and

[11] For an excellent discussion of the liberal position on pursuit of projects, see Loren E. Lomasky, *Persons, Rights, and the Moral Community* (New York: Oxford University Press,).

[12] Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), ???

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[13] Michael J. Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self" *Political Theory* 12 (1984): 81-96.

[14] Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 261-275.

[15] Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of Community: The Reinvention of American Society* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1993), 96.